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# Albania Unlikely to Shun Isolationism Following Death of Its Longtime Leader

## FOREIGN INSIGHT

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VIENNA, Austria—The Albanian diplomat responded to reporters' requests to attend today's funeral of Enver Hoxha, the country's leader for 41 years, with a characteristic cold shoulder.

"It isn't the practice of our protocol that Western journalists attend such events," he said.

Then would it, at least, be possible to accompany a Western statesman's delegation to the country?

"There won't be any invitations to leaders of either East or West," he replied.

Mr. Hoxha's burial will be as insulated from Western curiosity as was much of his unprecedentedly long communist rule of Albania, an enigmatic slice of land the size of Maryland pinched up against the Adriatic by Yugoslavia and Greece. A backward land of 2.8 million people, Albania represents the purest preserve of Stalinism, a country that refuses to consider itself in any camp: East, West, nonaligned or neutral.

The question now is whether the country will emerge from its self-woven cocoon.

Albania already has been cautiously reestablishing and improving ties with some Western countries, chiefly for economic reasons. The most noteworthy of these are Austria, Italy and West Germany. However, the country's new leader, Ramiz Alia, is dedicated to Mr. Hoxha's policy of animosity to both superpowers, and few analysts expect any dramatic changes. Still, there is nervousness about Soviet designs on the country.

Western diplomats say the West should care about Albania to avoid allowing the Soviet Union the opportunity to develop close enough ties to give Moscow access to Albanian ports. Far worse for the West would be the unlikely return of Albania to the Warsaw Pact, which it officially abandoned in 1968 after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Yugoslavia worries most about closer Soviet-Albanian ties because of its own restless Albanian minority in Kosovo province, where it fears greater Soviet influence could make the problems even more troublesome. Italy worries because its geographic heel jabs within a short boat launch of Albania; Soviet missiles stationed in Albania would be within easy striking distance.

The pretender to the Albanian throne also is worried. Leka I, the 6-foot-9 son of King Zog, lives in a South African farmhouse. He emerged in Paris following Mr. Hoxha's death to warn about the "danger of Soviet expansion" and to appeal to all Albanian nationalists to "unify in the creation of a free nation."

Albanian diplomats in the West don't show any indication of warming to Moscow, and they insist such concern is wasted energy. Albania regularly refuses olive branches extended by the Kremlin, which Albanians consider the nerve center of "social imperialism," as opposed to simple American "imperialism." There is always the danger that some previously purged faction of Albania might call for fraternal assistance from Moscow, but most Western analysts believe an economically pressed Moscow interested in cooperation with the West wouldn't consider the carrot worth the chase.

Albanian officials chafe when asked whether their country's isolationist course will change. They see themselves more as unspoiled individualists than isolationists. They say their decisions to ally themselves with Stalin, then turn against his successors and leave the Warsaw Pact, were moral stands. So, too, Albanian officials say, was the decision to befriend Mao Tse-tung, then cut off relations with China in 1978 when Peking grew friendlier with the West, despite \$800 million of assistance from Peking over 17 years.

When Eastern Europe's Rip Van Winkle rubs its eyes and focuses on the world around it, it finds itself decades behind economically. However, when Albanian diplomats are asked if it isn't a little odd that private cars are banned, they respond that their air is squeaky clean and that more people than ever own bicycles. When they are warned that they suffer from years of underinvestment, they respond that they are lucky to be spared the political and economic burdens of debt. Indeed, their constitution doesn't allow borrowing from capitalists or "bourgeois and revisionist monopolies and states."

Albania forbids dissent, foreign travel, emigration and religious practice. It is energy self-sufficient, doesn't have an income tax and says there isn't any inflation. The government also forbids blue jeans, cosmetics, drugs, chewing gum and premarital sex.

Ramiz Alia, Mr. Hoxha's 59-year-old successor, seems more pragmatic. But the most anyone knows about him is that he has been true enough to Mr. Hoxha's policies to survive in a system that mercifully removes rivals. Rumor has it that

former Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu, who was accused of working for intelligence agencies from the East, West and nonaligned Yugoslavia, was shot dead by Mr. Hoxha himself. At first, officials said it was suicide; now the official press has conceded he was liquidated.

Western diplomats believe Mr. Hoxha was ill for some time, and that Mr. Alia cautiously changed policies with Mr. Hoxha's blessing.

One major reversal was when Albania last year stopped calling China "revisionist." This was probably a practical decision, because Albania needed spare parts and equipment for industrial projects built before trade relations with Peking were broken off.